

**Whither History?**  
**The Emergence of a Modern Preservation Movement**  
**in**  
**New South Wales**

**Susan McClean**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
University of Technology, Sydney**

**2007**

**CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

---

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
Certificate Of Authorship /Authenticity	ii
List of Images	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Abstract	ix
 Introduction	 1
Scope and Argument	4
The Field	8
Heritage Studies in Australia	18
My Approach	23
Concepts and Definitions	25
Summary of Chapters	32
 <b><i>Part I The Preservation Movement Emerges: Politics, Processes, Representations</i></b>	 <b>35</b>
1 History and Historic Preservation: Representing Race and Nation	36
Phase I Raising historic monuments: race and place	38
The character of the RAHS	48
The Rangers: an early <i>cause célèbre</i>	50
Preservation Issues	54
Phase II Managing Preservation: politics, nation and empire	60
Politics and identity in the RAHS	60
Creating, negotiating and contesting national monuments	70
The Presentism of Historic Preservation	77
A Broader Preservation Movement Emerges	81
Phase III Seeing History	82
 2 The Rise of the Visual: Artists and Historic Preservation	 89
Commemorating white settlement: the <i>Picturesque Atlas of Australasia</i>	91
Picturesque developments: the old Sydney theme and its successors	98
Circulation of images of historic buildings:	
Art societies and exhibitions	118
Increasing the range of products	120
Magazines and the daily press	121

3 Dilemmas of Modernity: Architects, Planners and Historic Preservation	130
Seeking a national architecture	132
Practices of architectural history and preservation	143
Hardy Wilson and the field of architecture	146
Advocating preservation	156
 <b><i>Part II Case Studies</i></b>	168
4 Rituals of the Nation: Viewing Vacluse House 1915–1950	169
Visiting the national past	171
Governing themes	181
Confusion in the house: the Wentworths at home?	188
Seeking historicity and affect	198
 5 To Eurunderee and back: Preserving Henry Lawson’s Home	203
Mourning Henry	206
Preserving the Lawson Home	210
Australia’s symbolic home	219
A sporadic advocacy	222
Memorialised but not preserved	234
 6 Hybridities: the Modern and the Traditional at Burdekin House	237
Preservation, modernity and the anti-modern	241
The modern maelstrom in operation	249
A turning point	261
 <b><i>Part III Institutionalisation</i></b>	268
7 The Triumph of the Visual	269
Preservation by the State: the Cumberland County Council	273
Popular preservation: the National Trust	287
 Conclusion	306
 Bibliography and Abbreviations	314

**IMAGES****Page****CHAPTER 1**

1. Sydney Ure Smith, *The Rangers 1911* 51
2. *Vaocluse House Convict Barracks* 55
3. Arthur Rickard and Co, *Home Seekers* 79
4. Norman Lindsay, 'No Invitation: buzz off or I'll book you' 88

**CHAPTER 2**

5. Henry Fullwood, *Old Government House Parramatta* 94
6. John Eyre, *A View of Sydney From the West Side of the Cove* 97
7. Livingstone Hopkins: [*View of the Rocks, old Sydney*] 99
8. Julian Rossi Ashton, *Old House Trinity Lane, Sydney* 101
9. Harold Cazneaux, *Urchins at Play, Surry Hills* 106
10. Lionel Lindsay, *The Rocks, Sydney.* 109
11. Lionel Lindsay, *Bowden's Corner in Castlereagh Street* 111
12. W. Hardy Wilson, *Verandah to Newington on the Parramatta River* 114
13. W. Hardy Wilson, *Fernhill, Mulgoa* 115
14. Harold Cazneaux, *Staircase, Elizabeth Bay House* 117
15. The progress of the *Herald* 125

**Chapter 3.**

16. W. Hardy Wilson, *St Clair Cottage Goulburn* 141
17. W. Hardy Wilson, *Entrance to Newington on the Parramatta River* 148
18. W. Hardy Wilson, *Cottage in Davey Street Hobart* 149
19. photographer unknown, *Bungaribee, Doonside* 154
20. W. Hardy Wilson, *Bungaribee, Eastern Creek* 154

**Chapter 4.**

21. Vaocluse House before it was upgraded 176
22. Vaocluse House with two new towers at the eastern end 178
23. Government Architect's *Plans of Vaocluse House, 1910* 182
24. Vaocluse 'Drawing Room or Ballroom,' 1933 191
25. Actors at Vaocluse House, 1932 198
26. The latest in modern furnishings 200

**Chapter 5.**

27. Picturesque memories: ‘On the Road with Cobb and Co’.	216
28. The Bullock-train: ‘The Road to Grenfell’	216
29. Camp-draft: ‘In the Fairy West’	216
30. The Old Lawson Home at Eurunderee	218

**Chapter 6.**

31. Hardy Wilson’s romantic interpretation of Burdekin House	239
32. <i>A party leave Burdekin House for the Randwick races</i>	240
33. Hardy Wilson, <i>Burdekin House, Macquarie Street</i> (detail)	245
34. Lawlor, <i>Drawing Room, Burdekin House,</i>	249
35. Sydney Ure Smith, <i>Burdekin House Macquarie Street</i>	256
36. Lawlor, <i>Burdekin House, Macquarie Street, Sydney</i>	257
37. Ted Hood, <i>Down Macquarie Street</i>	258
38. A sombre Burdekin House	260
39. Georgiana Lowe, <i>Nelson Bay</i> [Bronte House, Sydney]	264

**Chapter 7.**

40. The Cumberland County Council’s Recommended List	278
41. Real Estate Poster, Elizabeth Farm, 1883	286
42. St Malo, Hunters Hill	299
43. Idealising Home: Macquarie Field House	304

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to warmly acknowledge the insight, scholarly commentary and ongoing support of my Supervisor Associate Professor Paula Hamilton and my Co-Supervisor Associate Professor Paul Ashton throughout the term of this thesis. I also acknowledge early and fruitful discussions with Associate Professor Heather Goodall. Their commitment to the academic development of students in general and to mine in particular have been essential to the completion of this work.

Both my Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton have been most supportive in my applications for funding, including my application for the UTS Doctoral Scholarship, which I have much appreciated. My grateful thanks also go to the UTS Board, which awards, and makes provision for the sustaining finances of the scholarship for research students. I have also been the recipient of travel funding for my delivery of a conference paper before AHA in Adelaide, 2001, for which I thank the university. My Supervisors have also supported other projects, such as my instigation of the Post-Graduate Research Student Reading Group for Humanities students. For over three years they sustained me in my leadership and administration of this group, offering office resources early on and finding funding for a modest salary to maintain this vital group, which still provides a forum for students today.

I have been grateful for general discussions, lively debate on issues of public history and memory and for insightful commentary on my work by a number of colleagues, both scholars and other doctoral students, during the course of this work, namely Lynda Kelly, Mike Johnson, Jill Barnes, Raya Massie, Nathalie Apouchtine, Kate Waters, Rose Searby, Andrea Connor and Sandra Ridgewell.

The interdisciplinary Visiting Scholar's Programs offered by the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the Australian National University was important for my intellectual development. Bain Attwood and Dipesh Chakrabaty, particularly, were inspirational in the *Memory History and Cross-Cultural Research* Program of 2001, for which I warmly thank them.

Invaluable practical assistance was offered by a number of people in producing the thesis. The generous assistance of librarians, archivists and curators at many institutions

has made possible the investigation of what is a very fragmented range of records. I am particularly grateful to Mari Metzke, Kathy Curran and Kylie Rees at the Royal Australian Historical Society, to Julie Blyth at the National Trust Archives and to Andrew Radclyffe at Mudgee Library. Suzanne Bravery and Lynn Collins offered ready curatorial access and insights at Vacluse House and Megan Martin and Matthew Stephens were similarly helpful at Historic Houses Trust Library. The work of proof-readers Liisa Anderson and Pat Skinner has been invaluable. The production of images could not have happened without Mike O'Halloran's marvellous expertise and ready assistance. Patrick Tooth, Laura Russo and Tom McClean offered their IT skills and support during my long battle with corrupted Endnote software, which from time to time inserted wildly inappropriate references into some footnotes. It is my fervent hope that I have now identified and corrected these discrepancies.

My family has warmly and generously supported me in this long and arduous endeavour. Discussions with my husband John have often brought a fresh perspective to my work. John has inevitably held the fort at home on the many occasions when I have worked well into the night trying to attain that last draft. Indeed the family would not still be a family without his untiring support. My sons Tom, Alex and Nick have also sustained me, offering practical assistance, discussions and empathy when the task seemed unending. I offer them all my grateful thanks.



## ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, modernisation was underway in Australia. The social and political ruptures characteristic of that process resulted in many feeling the need for continuity between the past and the present. In New South Wales the desire for stability and continuity was actively represented through efforts to prevent the demolition a variety of historic places that held communal memories. The preservation of historic buildings began with pressure from local groups maintaining a sense of place, but took on a nationalist cast, when, in a climate of rising nationalism, environmental development began to remove buildings significant to powerful social groups and to a wider range of communities.

This thesis investigates the history of the practice of preserving historic buildings in New South Wales from 1900 to the 1950s. It particularly pays attention to the positioning of historians within the emerging building-preservation movement, and takes note of historic preservation's relationship to the formation of national identities and to the diverse changes wrought by modernity on society and culture. From the early years of the twentieth century, amateur and then professional historians were positioned as experts and leaders in Australian history. The brief included active promotion of historic preservation. Thus began the transformation of buildings into historic monuments, that is, monuments not purpose-built, but chosen from existing building stock for those shared memories and historical associations, used to connect people to communal identities, including national identities.

Monumentalisation, however, transforms old buildings into structures whose attachment to identity not only emerges from memorial associations but which is also substantially visual – that is, its role is to present as something of a spectacle. By the 1930s, at a time when modern visual technologies were producing a rising visual sensibility, many architects and artists were persuaded that some colonial buildings had aesthetic merit. Tensions arose between architectural factions on the question of preservation, as they also did within planning. Furthermore, unexplored differences between the communal meanings which architects assigned to historic buildings and those assumed by historians led to events that damaged the authority of the history profession over historic buildings. After World War II, artistic and aesthetic ideas came to dominate the

emerging idea of heritage. The institutionalisation of the movement was overseen by amateur and professional groups favouring an aesthetic sensibility to the detriment of an historical approach. How and why this occurred is the subject of this work.